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SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: NOMINATION FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S
AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE

REF: STATE 126072

11. (U) Embassy Caracas is pleased to nominate Isela I. Iguaran for the Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage, per reftel.

12. (U) Nominee: Isela I. Iguaran

13. (U) Title and Institution: President, Bloque Vecinal Indigena (Indigenous Issues NGO)

14. (U) Date of Birth: February 14, 1957

15. (U) Contact Information: Mobile: 58-0416-562-5505; e-mail iselawayuu@hotmail.com

16. (SBU) Justification: Isela Iguaran, President of the Indigenous Issues NGO Bloque Vecinal Indigena, is a tireless defender of the rights of the Wayuu indigenous people and a long-time advocate of women's issues in Venezuela. (Note: The Wayuu is one of the largest indigenous groups in Venezuela with a population of approximately 17,000, mostly concentrated in northwestern Venezuela. End Note.) Through her work with Bloque Vecinal Indigena, she helped create over 100 neighborhood associations in Zulia state, western Venezuela. Iguaran's leadership capabilities and sustained commitment to these associations has equipped regional activists with the skills necessary to tackle local problems, effectively lobby elected officials, and develop positive activities for their communities. Similarly, Iguaran has been instrumental in the creation of 10 import-export cooperatives aimed at producing greater social and economic benefits for the Wayuu community along the Venezuelan-Colombian border.

17. (SBU) Iguaran is staunchly committed to quality and culturally-sensitive education. She has held several administrative positions pertaining to education, including Coordinator of Cultural Programs in Paez municipality and Superintendent of Education of Zulia state. She currently works as an elementary school teacher in western Venezuela. Separately, Iguaran is a member of the Permanent Commission on Indigenous Issues, Resources, and Environment of the Zulia State Legislature.

18. (SBU) At a time when human rights defenders have become the targets of increased scrutiny for their work in the service of others, Iguaran has shown exceptional courage in her unwavering dedication to demanding social, cultural, and economic benefits for indigenous peoples and women. Though the environment in which Iguaran works in is highly politically polarized, she nevertheless remains committed to securing these fundamental human rights for her community at large.

¶10. (U) Embassy Caracas' officer responsible for women's issues is Poloff Ms. Veronica Torres; phone: 58-212-907-8052; e-mail: TorresV@state.gov.

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